

the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2, 2008, as Italian Independence Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day by celebrating the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to our Nation.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:59 a.m., June 3, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on June 4.

### **Remarks at the Ford's Theatre Gala**

*June 1, 2008*

Thank you all. Hal, thanks for the introduction. And I want to thank you all for supporting Ford's Theatre. Laura and I have been coming here now for 8 years to the Ford's Theatre gala, and this is by far the best.

We want to thank our choir and our orchestra and all the fabulous performers for taking time out of your busy schedules to help—to support this really important part of Washington. And Gatlin is probably saying, of course, I said that for the crowd last year. [*Laughter*] But, no, it really was fantastic. And it's such an uplifting performance and a reminder of what a great President Abraham Lincoln was.

I do want to thank Paul Tetreault for being a really fabulous director of the Ford's Theatre. And I want to thank the gala cochair and all the people who support the Ford's Theatre. I know you're excited about the opening of the renovated Ford's Theatre in February 2009. Laura and I are excited too. Just send the pictures down to Crawford. [*Laughter*]

Thanks for a fabulous evening, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. at the National Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to actor

Hal Holbrook; musician Larry Gatlin; and Paul R. Tetreault, producing director, Ford's Theatre. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2.

### **Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Private First Class Ross A. McGinnis**

*June 2, 2008*

Good morning. Welcome to the White House. A week ago, on Memorial Day, the flag of the United States flew in halfstaff in tribute to those who fell in service to our country. Today we pay special homage to one of those heroes: Private First Class Ross Andrew McGinnis of the United States Army. Private McGinnis died in a combat zone in Iraq on December the 4th, 2006, and for his heroism that day, he now receives the Medal of Honor.

In a few moments, the Military Aide will read the citation, and the Medal will be accepted by Ross's mom and dad, Romyne and Tom. It's a privilege to have with us as well, Becky and Katie, Ross's sisters.

I also want to thank the other distinguished guests who have joined us: Mr. Vice President; Secretary Jim Peake of Veterans Affairs; Secretary Pete Geren of the Army; Secretary Michael Wynne of the Air Force; General Jim "Hoss" Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I appreciate other members of the administration for joining us.

I want to thank Members of the United States Congress who have joined us today: Steve Buyer, John Peterson, Louie Gohmert. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the chaplain for the prayer. We welcome friends and family members of Ross, as well as members of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, including Charlie Company, that's with us today.

We're also joined by Private McGinnis's vehicle crew, the very men who witnessed his incredible bravery. We welcome Sergeant First Class Cedric Thomas, Staff Sergeant Ian Newland, Sergeant Lyle Buehler, and Specialist Sean Lawson.